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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 001196

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FOR NEA/ELA AND DRL/NESCA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [IR](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN BLOGGERS FIXATED ON IRANIAN UNREST

REF: CAIRO 544

Classified By: Economic-Political Minister-Counselor
William R. Stewart for reason 1.4 (d).

11. KEY POINTS

-- (U) Egyptian bloggers remain fixated on the unrest in Iran, even as the story drops from the front pages of local newspapers.

-- (U) Bloggers have reported on developments, using traditional and "new" media sources, and posting photos and videos of the protests and killings. They are particularly interested in Hizballah's reported role in the crackdown.

-- (U) Most bloggers have expressed support for the Iranian opposition, and many have backed President Obama's public comments. Others have accused the U.S. of hypocrisy for condemning violence in Iran while waging war in Afghanistan.

-- (C) There is a conspicuous lack of blogger commentary on the possible implications for Egypt. One blogger told us privately that the unrest "means nothing for Egypt."

Bloggers Reporting...

12. (U) Bloggers have been reporting developments on the ground, sourced from major news organizations, Twitter, Facebook, video and e-mails from anonymous friends in Iran. They have also provided analysis on issues such as the U.S. and Israeli stances on the issue, the role of Hizballah, and the merits of opposition candidate Moussavi versus Iranian President Ahmadinejad. We have seen only one blogger calling for action -- Dalia Ziada of the American-Islamic Conference who requested her readers sign a petition calling on their governments to condemn and shun the Iranian government until Iranians are allowed "to peacefully address their election concerns."

13. (U) As the Iranian protests began, bloggers reported on the government's steps to silence the foreign media, and on the size of opposition rallies. As events became violent, bloggers reported the numbers of victims and posted graphic videos and photos of the killings. They also posted photos of opposition rallies and oppositionists attacking government backed militias. Bloggers have also focused on the death of the teenage girl Neda Sultan, posting the YouTube video of her killing, and criticizing the Iranian government for not permitting a "proper funeral." One blogger compared Sultan to victims of police brutality in Egypt.

14. (U) Bloggers have been interested in possible Hizballah involvement in the unrest, with Wael Abbas reporting that a Hizballah-backed militia attacked a student dormitory in

Teheran, and "Sandmonkey" citing allegations in the German newspaper "Der Spiegel" that Hizballah militants have been participating in the crackdown. Abbas wrote that according to Iranian bloggers some of the riot police in Teheran appeared to be Lebanese. Bloggers have also focused on steps the Iranian government has taken against foreign media, reporting on June 15 that the government closed the "Al-Arabiya" office, and on June 24 that it arrested reporters from "The New York Times" and "The Washington Times."

... And Analyzing

¶5. (U) Most bloggers have expressed explicit support for Moussavi and the demonstrators, and criticism of Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Khamanei. One blogger described Khamanei's June 19 sermon calling for an end to protests as similar to the "bad speech" of "an Arab leader." Some bloggers backed President Obama's public comments on the unrest and posited that direct U.S. support for the opposition would be counterproductive. Blogger Hossam Hamalawy who often expresses anti-U.S. views criticized the U.S. as "hypocritical" for deplored the violence in Iran while continuing to "drop bombs in Afghanistan." Another blogger asserted that the U.S. supports freedom of speech only in countries that are not Washington's "clients." One blogger commented that Egyptians are watching democracy all over the world without practicing it themselves.

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Iranian Protests "Mean Nothing for Egypt"

¶6. (C) "Sandmonkey" told us privately that he admires the Iranian opposition for "standing up to the system" and "showing the world they are against the Mullahs." He believes Egyptians view the Iranian demonstrators "with pure envy" for protesting against their government in a way that Egyptians cannot. The Iranian protests "mean nothing for Egypt," he asserted, speculating that there will be no impact on democracy activists in Egypt. Another blogger told us she believes increased freedom in Iran would be in Egypt's interest, but she worried that Iranian security forces had succeeded in intimidating the protestors. President of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights Hisham Kassem told us any impact on Egypt would only become apparent in the coming months.

Comment: Silence on Implications for Egypt

¶7. (C) While Egyptian bloggers are actively reporting and analyzing events, they have largely refrained from speculating on the possible implications for Egypt. Whether out of fear of a GOE crackdown for drawing parallels, or a sense that the Iranian context is completely different -- bloggers have decided not to confront this issue. Even the prolific English-language blogger Zeinab Mohammed, who comments on everything from Egyptian diplomats' New York parking tickets to Gamal Mubarak's appearance, shied away from this topic. While she posted a quote from one CNN analyst, "If it hadn't happened in Iran, Egypt would be the next place for an uprising," she would only add that it was "interesting."

SCOBAY